SO YOU WANT TO KILL US ALL?
AND YOU WOULDN'T MIND IF THE GAMEBOARD AND PIECES YOU CLAIM TO BE A PUBLIC TREASURE WERE TO BE DESTROYED IN THAT ATTACK?
MY ORDERS PUT PREFERENCE ON CAPTURE OVER PROTECTION AND GIVE ME THAT RIGHT.
SO YES, LIFE OR DEATH IS NOT A QUESTION.
THE QUICKEST WAY WOULD BE TO DISMANTLE EVERYTHING AND THEN REASSEMBLE IT IN A WAY THAT ALLOWS ALTERATIONS.
WHAT ADVANTAGES ARE THERE FOR ME TO ACCEPT YOUR DEMANDS?
WE CAN END THIS WITHOUT ANY UNNECESSARY QUARRELS
AND YOUR WORK THAT YOU HOLD SO MUCH PRIDE IN WILL BE DISPLAYED ON A PEDESTAL IN THE CAPITAL OF BOOKS.

YOU DO UNDERSTAND THAT YOU CANNOT WIN, DO YOU?!
THIS ISN'T EVEN A BATTLE.
IT'S JUST ME THROWING PEBBLES AT YOU WHO FOOLISHLY ESCAPED RIGHT TO THE BOTTOM OF A WELL.

CHAPTER 27: DETECTIVE

WHATEVER I CHOOSE, WE WILL BE YOUR PLAYTHINGS FOR ALL ETERNITY...
THE ONLY THING I CAN CHOOSE IS HOW THE WITCHES OF THE CAPITAL WILL PORTRAY MY FINAL HOURS
KI HI HI!
YOU SHOULD SURRENDER IF YOU REALLY HOLD THIS GAMEBOARD DEAR
WE ENSURE TO PROTECT THE GAME'S INTEGRITY IN RETURN FOR YOUR DISEMBOWELMENT
THEN HEAR MY ANSWER
.....
I SEE

I AM TIRED.
.....
.....
HUH?
.....

WHAT IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
MY GAME HAD ALREADY RUN ITS COURSE AT THE MOMENT I FINISHED MY FIGHT WITH BATTLER
ALL THE REPETITIONS AFTER THAT WERE ONLY DONE BECAUSE IT SUITED THE MOMENT
TO BE HONEST, I HAVE NOT EVEN THE STRENGTH TO PUT UP RESISTANCE ANYMORE
THAT IS HONESTLY NOT THE ANSWER THAT I EXPECTED TO GET
I THOUGHT YOU'D PUT UP ONE HELL OF A FIGHT OVER THIS...
SO YOU ARE WILLING TO SURRENDER?
REALLY?
IF I GET SLAUGHTERED ANYWAY, WHAT DOES IT MATTER?!
BE IT GIVING UP OR BEING BEATEN BY YOU, AS LONG AS IT LOWERS THE CURTAIN ON THIS STORY, I DON'T MIND EITHER WAY
AFTER THAT YOU MAY PLAY WITH IT HOWEVER YOU PLEASE

AS YOU MIGHT BE AWARE, THE GREAT LADY LAMBDADELTA RESIDES AMONG US.
WHAT NOW?
IT WON'T BE THIS EASY...
BUT CONCERNING THAT...
IT'S KIND OF AN ANTI-CLIMAX, BUT IT DOES SAVE ME A LOT OF TROUBLE
HER EXCELLENCY TOLD ME THAT SHE EXPECTS ME TO "DELIVER A DRAMATIC CLIMAX"...
AND SHE MUMBLED SOMETHING ABOUT GOING TO GATHER UP HER FRIENDS TO EVEN OUT THE FIGHTING POWER SO THAT WE CAN PUT UP A DO-OR-DIE RESISTANCE TO THE VERY END...
LADY LAMBDA-DELTA...
AND HER FRIENDS...?!

.....
ALL OF HER FRIENDS SEEM TO BE MIGHTY DOMINION LORDS, WITCHES AND MONSTERS THAT BECAME LEGEND DURING THEIR LIFETIME...
AND TO TOP IT ALL OFF, SHE ALREADY PLACED PHONECALLS TO ALL THE REGIONS TO GATHER THEM HERE.
SO HER EXCELLENCY CAUSED QUITE SOME FRICTION BETWEEN THOSE WHO ARE READY TO GO DOWN FIGHTING AND THOSE WHO WANT TO AVOID IT.
WE ARE TALKING ABOUT LAMBDA-DELTA HERE.
HER FIRING HER GUNS INTO THE AIR DOESN'T MEAN SHE IS GOING TO PROTECT THIS GAMEBOARD.

IF SHE GOES WILD WITH HER HORDE, INSTEAD OF RESETTING THE BOARD, SHE MIGHT JUST BLOW IT TO SMITHEREENS ALTOGETHER...
I CAME HERE TO FIGHT WITH YOU, LADY LAMBDADELTA AND HER FRIENDS ARE EVEN BEYOND MY CAPABILITIES
IF WE CAN END THIS WITHOUT GRAVE PROBLEMS BY JUST HAVING YOU PROCLAIM SURRENDER, LET US DO THIS
I WOULD LIKE THAT AS WELL
IF YOU SWEAR TO PROTECT ITS INTEGRITY
I WOULD GLADLY SURRENDER
I HAVE ENOUGH OF LETTING LADY LAMBDADELTA DO WITH THIS GAMEBOARD AS SHE PLEASES JUST AS MUCH

EVERYONE IS STILL UP IN ARMS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ATTACK AND READY TO STRIKE
..
SO I WOULD LIKE SOME TIME TO LET MOODS CALM DOWN...
I WILL RETURN TO THE DISCUSSION AND VOTE STRONGLY FOR A SURRENDER, AND ALSO GIVE MY BEST TO CALM DOWN THE COMMOTION LADY LAMOBADELTA IS RAISING
BUT
..
CAN YOU PLEASE HOLD TRUE TO THE TIME THIS DISCUSSION WILL TAKE?
I SEE NO PROBLEM WITH THAT HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU NEED?
AS MUCH AS SOMEHOW POSSIBLE
I WOULD NOT DARE TO ASK FOR LIMITLESS TIME... BUT JUST SO THAT NO EXTREME DECISIONS ARE MADE
I WILL GIVE YOU TIME...
BUT NOT WITHOUT END.
I WILL STAY HERE AND LISTEN TO THE DISCUSSION

I HAVE ALREADY MADE COMPRO-MISES!
WHAT ABOUT YOU MAKING SOME AS WELL?!
PEOPLE WILL SURELY STIFFEN UP IF YOU SHOW YOURSELF AND THEN ANY DISCUSSION WOULD BE...
PLEASE TAKE A SEAT IN THE HONORED GUEST AREA...
IS THERE ANY PROBLEM
WITH ME WAITING RIGHT HERE?!

NO, I SEE ..
JUST HAVE A SEAT HERE.
IT IS A SECRET CONFERENCE AFTER ALL.
YOU MAY NOT CROSS THIS VERY LINE HERE!
YOU, DELIVER THE INFOR-MATION TO MY MASTER!
タタ...

JUST AS PLAN-NED!
IT IS MY DUTY TO BUY THEM TIME FOR THAT!
LADY LAMBDADELTA AND BATTLER HEADED TO THE CAPITAL OF BOOKS WITH ANGE TO STOP THE OPENING OF THE BOOK OF THE ONE TRUTH.
IT IS ALL JUST A COVER-STORY!

2 SECONDS, AND DON'T MAKE NOISE!
THE MESSENGER GOAT HAS LEFT ERIKA'S FIELD OF VISION, IT IS NOW POSSIBLE TO ASSASSINATE IT!
ヒソヒソ
JUST FOLLOW THE GOAT!
DENIED!
THE SOLDIERS WON'T LEAVE THE SHIP BEFORE THE TIME LIMIT IS OVER, BUT IF CONTACT BREAKS OFF THEY WILL SURELY ORDER AN ATTACK IMMEDIATELY!
LADY BEATRICE, PLEASE GIVE US PERMISSION.
IF THE GOAT RETURNS TO THE SHIP, BERNKASTEL WILL SURELY SEND SOME COUNTER-MEASURES OR ORDERS.
OO, UNDER-STOOD!

I WANTED TO PLACE HER A LITTLE FURTHER AWAY THOUGH
FROM THIS DISTANCE THE COVER ON OUR FAKE DISCUSSION AND BATTLER'S ABSENCE MIGHT BE BLOWN RIGHT OFF
MILADY
HOW DOES THE SITUATION FARE?
I WILL DEFINITELY GET THE OSCAR FOR BEST ACTRESS THIS YEAR!
THAT IS THE ONLY RESISTANCE WE CAN PUT UP RIGHT NOW!
AS A FORM OF BACKUP FOR BATTLER-KUN
LEAVE THAT TO US! WE JUST NEED TO CAMP IT UP A LITTLE AND RAISE A REAL COMMOTION!

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!! WHAT ABOUT THOSE OF US WHO DO NOT WANT TO FIGHT?!
YOU DESPICABLE WEAKLING!! DON'T YOU HAVE THE SPIRIT TO WAGER ON ONE LAST SUCCESS?!
HOW MUCH LONGER DO YOU PLAN TO DRAW THIS OUT BATTLER?!?!
AAAAH!!
MASTEEERRRRR!!
GOOOOHDAAA!! YOU LOUSY DEFEATIST!!
BATTLER! JUST LEAVE THIS TO US ...

YOU JUST GIVE YOUR BEST TO PROTECT ANGE'S FUTURE...!!
PHEW
WHAT'S UP WITH THE CRAZY BIG LIBRARY

BE CAREFUL THOUGH.
I SEE.
YOU DON'T WANT TO ACCIDENTALLY START A BATTLE WITH BERN.
RIGHT NOW WE ARE LIKE TWO LITTLE COCKROACHES AND THEIR PRECIOUS BABY TRYING TO STOP THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF COCKROACHES.
IF WE WERE FOUND, WE'D BE SQUISHED.
WE ARE FIGHTING FOR THE ONE GOAL YOU HAVE.
TO STOP THE OPENING OF THE BOOK OF THE ONE TRUTH.

THE BOOK ITSELF IS DISPLAYED AT THE VERY CENTER OF THE PARTY, SO WE CAN'T POSSIBLY TAKE IT
BUT ONLY WHEN THE CEREMONY STARTS WILL THE KEY BE BROUGHT IN.
SO THE KEY IS STORED IN A DIFFERENT PLACE
THEN THAT IS GOING TO BE OUR GOAL.
BUT IT WILL DEFINITELY NOT BE UNPROTECTED.
IF WE CAN SEIZE THE KEY, THEN WE CAN ALSO END THIS GAME BETWEEN YOU AND ME THAT HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM US!
THE GAME WITH YOU...
YES.
IF WE CAN GET THE KEY INTO OUR HANDS WE CAN RETURN TO THE GOLDEN LAND

YOU WILL CHOOSE THE DOOR TO YOUR FUTURE.
I ALREADY TOLD YOU ABOUT THE TWO DOORS THAT YOU WILL BE SHOWN BY BEATO THEN, FROM WHICH YOU MUST CHOOSE AND OPEN ONE.

IF I CAN DELIVER YOU TO THE FUTURE ...
THEN OUR GAME WILL GET ITS HAPPY END!

.....
YEAH ...

WHA... WHAT?!
SH!
NGH!!
WHAT ABOUT IT?
IT'S JUST A CAT!
IT'S JUST A STAFF MEMBER THAT WILL ESCORT LOST VISITORS TO THE LOST CHILDREN CENTER OF THE CAPITAL OF BOOKS.
YEAH, JUST ONE OF BERN'S FAMILIARS ...

IT WILL BE BAD ENOUGH IF WE'RE SPOTTED BY THAT...

SINCE I WAS THE ONE WHO BROUGHT YOU GUYS HERE, IT WILL BE QUITE THE NUISANCE IF WE ARE DETECTED.
IN MY CASE...
IF I SUR-RENDER ...
I WILL PROB-ABLY BE STRIP-PED NAKED
AND MIGHT POSSIBLY BE FORGIVEN AFTER LIVING THROUGH THE WORST AND MOST DIS-GUSTING STRIP OF KAKERA FOR A HUNDRED YEARS OR SO
.....
HOW WONDERFUL... THEN I MIGHT BE ABLE UNDERSTAND BERN'S FEELINGS A LITTLE BIT BETTER...
YOU ARE TAKING ON QUITE THE RISK
AH, DON'T MENTION IT IT'S ALSO PART OF A SMALL PUNISHMENT
THANK YOU LAMBDADELTA!
YOU REALLY HELPED US BY GETTING US HERE!

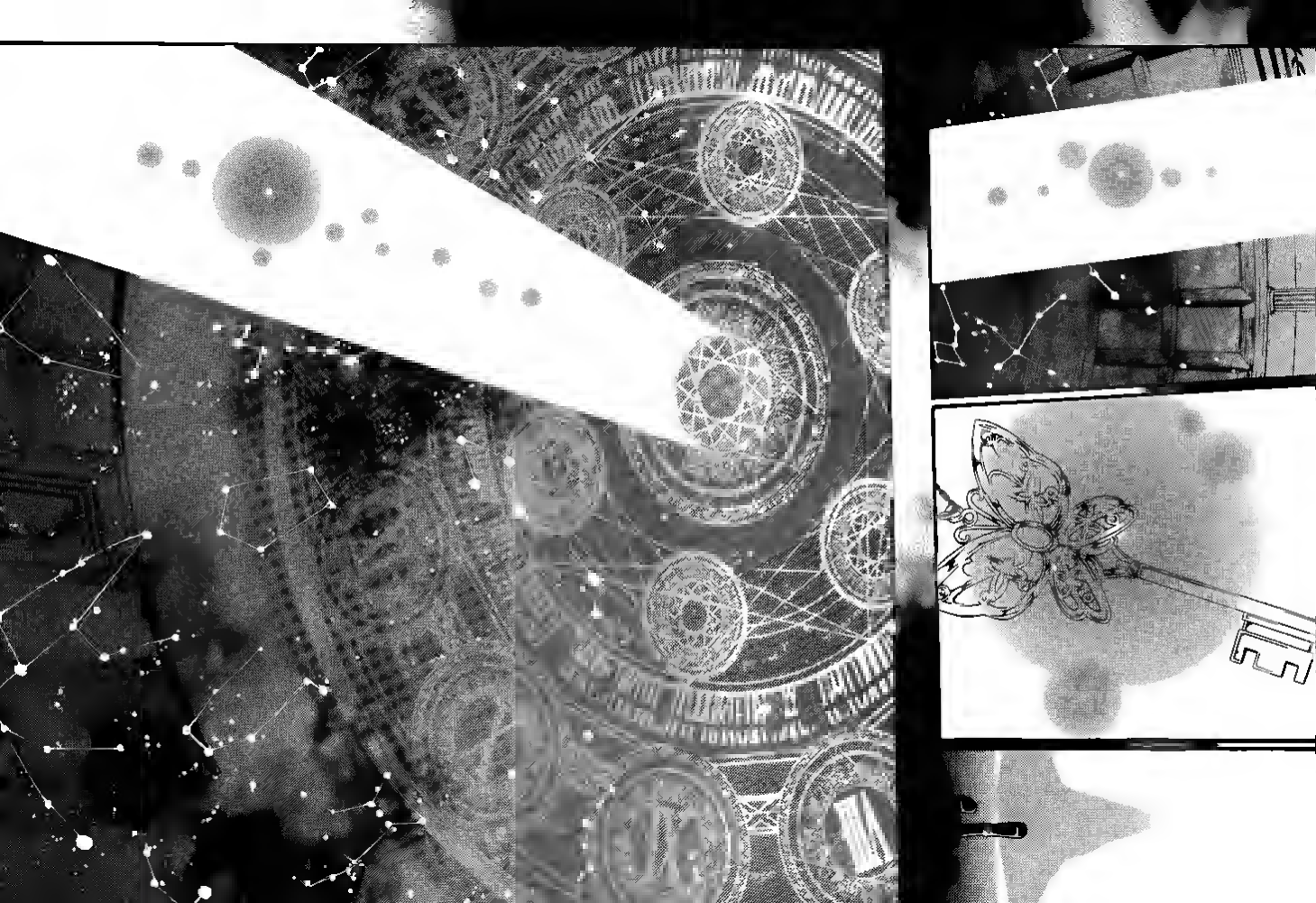
YOU SHOULD ESCAPE JUST LIKE WE DISCUSSED IT!
WE WILL TAKE CARE OF THE REST FROM NOW ON!
OH, YEAH!
WELL THEN!
HE ...
HEY YOU!
DIDN'T WE TALK ABOUT YOU GUYS SHOWING ME HOW YOUR STORY WOULD ADVANCE?!
HOW ARE YOU PLANNING TO LOOK FOR THE KEY CHAMBER IN THIS GIANT CITY?!
AND IF I GO HOME, HOW ARE YOU PLANNING TO ESCAPE THIS PLACE LATER?!

I CAME HERE WITH YOU TO SEE IT FROM CLOSE UP!
YOUR MAGNIF-ICENT HAPPY END!!
OUCH!
.....
...LAM-BDA-DELTA!

SHOW ME THAT MAGNIFICENT HAPPY END ALREADY!!
OKAY, OKAY...
WE CAN'T BE FOUND!
OVER HERE, THIS WAY!
OK!
THANK YOU, LAMBDA-DELTA...
A DO-OR-DIE RESISTANCE FROM LAMBDA'S CAMP?!
GATHERING UP ASSISTANCE?!

"NOOS"
"NOOS"
YOU MUST BE JOKING!
ERIKA REALLY MADE A REPORT LIKE THAT?!
.....
THOSE MONSTERS LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN TURNING EVERY-THING UPSIDE DOWN BY BACKING UP AN UNFAVOURABLE BATTLE...!!!
BUT SHE HAS QUITE THE GROUP OF WEIRD FRIENDS ...
SHE SHOULD KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO MAKE AN ENEMY OUT OF AUAU...
BRING ME MY TELE-PHONE!!
LAMBDA MIGHT JUST BE CAPABLE OF THIS ...
SHE IS SUCH A FOOL SOMETIMES!!

I WILL CALL UP ALL OF HER FRIENDS!
I WILL ORDER THEM NOT TO GET INVOLVED IN SUCH A FOOLISH GAME...!
ゴホホ…
AAAH, OF COURSE! BECAUSE I HAVE EXACTLY ZERO FRIENDS!!
WHAT WAS THE PHONE ETIQUETTE AGAIN? YOU SAY HELLO IN THE BEGINNING?!
UUUH... THE NUMBER ...
WHY DON'T I HAVE ANY NUMBERS IN HERE?
ブヒィ!!



OH, WHAT CREEPY EYES YOU MAKE!
I WILL STAY HERE, SO YOU GO AND PLAY SOME-WHERE ELSE PLEASE!
I WAS ORDERED BY LADY BERN-KASTEL "TO PROTECT" THIS KEY!
DID YOU FORGET THAT I AM YOUR ALLY?
WHAT?
YOU WEREN'T TOLD ABOUT THAT?
WELL, FOR NOW...
.....

LET'S SEE ...
HOW SOFT YOU KITTIES REALLY ARE!!
LET ME HAVE A BITE!!

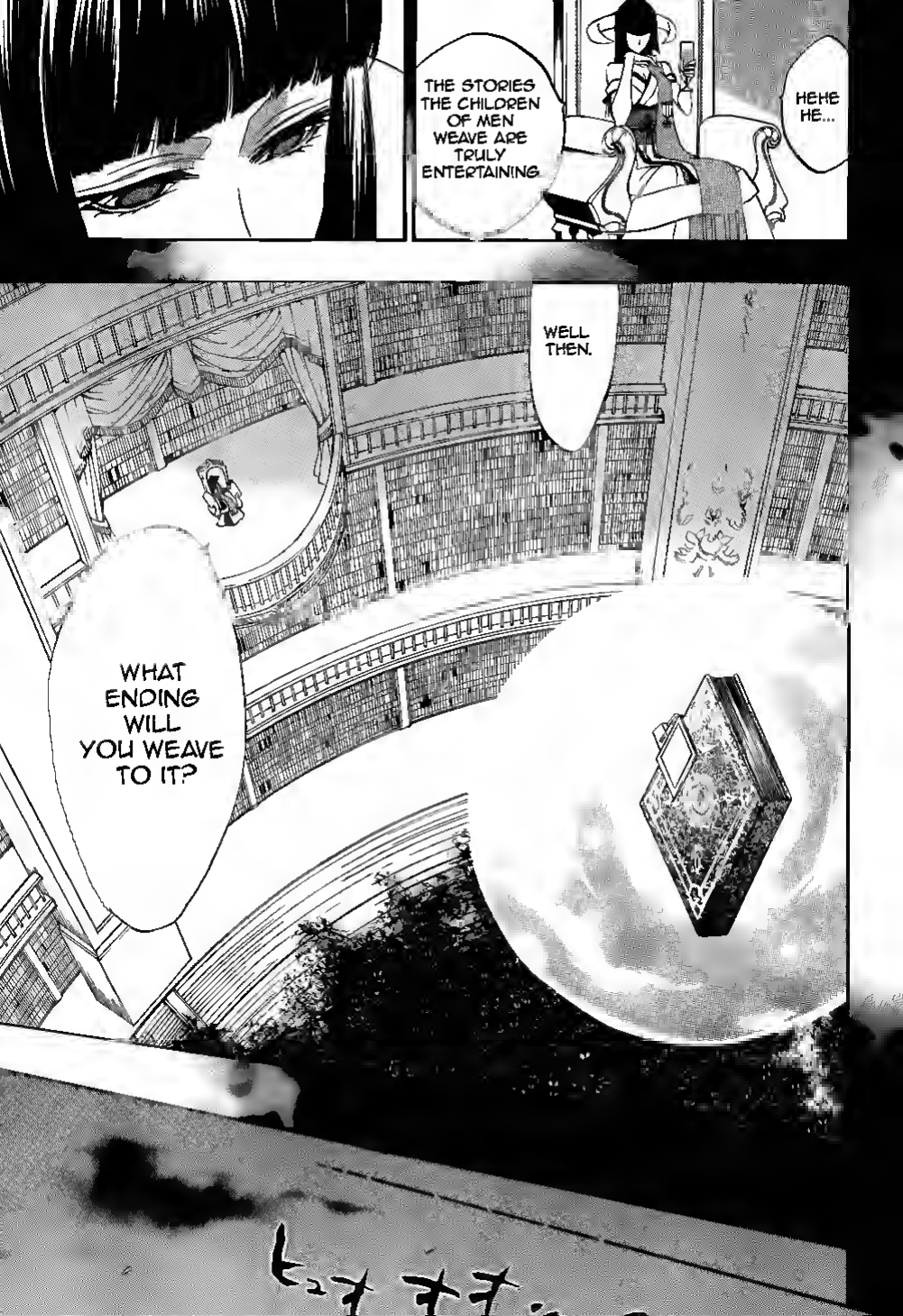
WILL YOU DIE ...
IF I EAT YOUR GUTS ?!
ANGE... SHE WILL COME RIGHT?
TOK

TO CHOOSE WHAT TO DO FROM NOW...
NOW THAT YOU KNOW EVERY-THING.
AND IT IS YOUR DUTY ...
YOU GOT HARDENED BY THOSE 12 YEARS YOU SUFFERED THROUGH!
YOU WILL COME, RIGHT?
BECAUSE YOU CHOOSE YOUR OWN FUTURE.
.....
.....
THAT IS...

K
THIS IS...
WHAT DO YOU THINK ...?
.....
K
K...
KEY...
THE KEY?
YOU THINK WE HAVE ANOTHER ALLY HERE?
THESE LETTERS POPPED UP WHEN WE CAME CLOSER, SO IT MUST BE A MESSAGE FOR US!
MIGHT BE A TRAP...

MY BIGGEST ALLY OF ALL...
YES, AN ALLY ...
I KNOW WHO SHE'S TALKING ABOUT! WE CAN TRUST HER!
SHE'S PROBABLY CAREFULLY FEEDING US INFO ON WHERE THE KEY IS!
LET'S GO...!!
HOW CAN YOU BE SURE?
IT'S OKAY ...
WERE YOU THE ONE WHO SLIPPED ME...
THE ENTRANCE CARD...

THANK YOU... EVA... KAASAN ...


THE STORIES THE CHILDREN OF MEN WEAVE ARE TRULY ENTERTAINING.
HEHE HE...
WELL THEN.
WHAT ENDING WILL YOU WEAVE TO IT?

NOT BAD AT ALL, I HAVE TO SAY.
WHILE BEING ACCUSED OF BEING A DEFEATIST, BEATO IS TRYING HER BEST TO CALM THEM ALL DOWN A NOTCH.

I'M ALRIGHT!
THE SECOND IT GOES SILENT IN HERE, ERIKA WILL COME AND DEMAND A SOLUTION!
WE HAVE TO MAKE IT LOOK AS IF THIS SHAM OF A DISCUSSION IS STILL GOING ON FULL COURSE!
PRETEND TO START CRYING ALL OF SUDDEN AND USE THAT TO REST A LITTLE!
BEATO, HOLD IN THERE! YOUR BODY WON'T KEEP UP WHEN YOU KEEP THE TENSION SO HIGH!
YOU DAMN COWARD!! I DON'T PLAN ON BECOMING A PRISONER WHILE THERE IS STILL A BREATH IN MY BODY!!
NOW STOP IT AND CALM DOWN! THERE'S NOTHING TO BE WON BY DYING ON THE BATTLE-FIELD!!
IT MIGHT BUY US SOME TIME IF WE JUST ATTACK THEM HEAD ON!!
IF YOU, LORD BATTLER, ORDER US TO DO SO...
WE WILL GLADLY GIVE OUR LIVES IN BATTLE!!
THEY MIGHT NOT HURT US IF WE JUST SURRENDER ...
AS LONG AS WE ARE ALIVE THERE IS A CHANCE!

YE ...
YES! WE HAVE TO FIGHT FOR IT!
I HAVE BEEN TELLING YOU THAT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING!!
THERE IS NO WAY OF KNOWING WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US IF WE SURRENDER!
THERE IS A BETTER CHANCE OF WINNING OUR LIVES BY FIGHTING FOR THEM!
ガタ!
!?

WAIT FOR A SECOND!
I AM THE DE-TEC-TIVE!
MY MEMORY IS AS GOOD AS A TAPING DEVICE!
WHA... WHAT DO YOU...
GOHDA-SAN, ANSWER MY QUESTIONS!!
YE...
YES!!
"HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!! WHAT ABOUT THOSE OF US WHO DO NOT WANT TO FIGHT?!"
BUT RIGHT NOW YOU JUST SAID...
"WE HAVE TO FIGHT FOR IT! I HAVE BEEN TELLING YOU THAT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING!!"
THAT WAS THE FIRST SENTENCE I HEARD YOU SPEAK HERE!

NO!
I THINK IT IS QUITE COMMON FOR PEOPLE TO CHANGE THEIR OPINION DURING A DISCUSSION.
OH ...
REALLY.. DID I SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT?!
DURING YOUR DISCUSSION NOT ONE PERSON HAD SHOWN ANY SIGNS OF CHANGING THEIR OPINION!
ONLY GOHDA-SAN HAD VERY ABRUPTLY MADE A HEEL-TURN ON WHAT HE HAD CLAIMED!
FROM THAT ONLY TWO STRANDS OF REASONING CAN BE DRAWN UP!
ONE: GOHDA-SAN IS A PERSON WHO HAD NO OPINION IN THE FIRST PLACE AND JUST RODE ON WHATEVER MOOD WAS POPULAR RIGHT NOW!
OR THE OTHER... NOT ONLY GOHDA-SAN, BUT NOBODY HAD ANY OPINION FROM THE VERY BEGINNING ...
BECAUSE YOUR GOAL WAS THE VERY ACT OF CREATING A DISCUSSION.

IF THERE IS A REASON FOR PROLONGING A DISCUSSION THEN IT IS BUYING TIME...
BUT WHAT PROFIT COULD YOU GAIN FROM BUYING TIME?
TO WAIT UNTIL LADY LAMBDADELTA'S FORCES ARRIVE HERE?
THAT ISN'T IT, RIGHT?!
WHY IS IT THAT ALL THE TIME YOU WERE TALKING ...
NEITHER LAMBDA-DELTA'S NOR BATTLER'S OPINION REACHED MY EAR EVEN ONCE?!
FROM ALL THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE SOLUTION I CAN ARRIVE AT!
ﾋｭｰﾋｭｰ...

LADY LAMBDADELTA AND BATTLER ARE NOT HERE AND ARE ACTUALLY INFILTRATING THE CAPITAL OF BOOKS RIGHT NOW.
THEIR GOAL IS THE BOOK OF THE ONE TRUTH, THE KEY, AS WELL AS THE RESCUE OF ANGE.
ALL YOUR QUARRELING HAS JUST BEEN A PLOY TO BUY TIME UNTIL THEY MAKE IT BACK HERE

BUT, JUST BY GOHDA-SAN MESSING UP HIS LINE-DELIVERY, SUCH REASONING IS POSSIBLE FOR FURUDO ERIKA.
WHAT DO YOU THINK EVERYONE?!
DROP

UH
A FAKE!!
SHE'S FAST!
KILL HER!

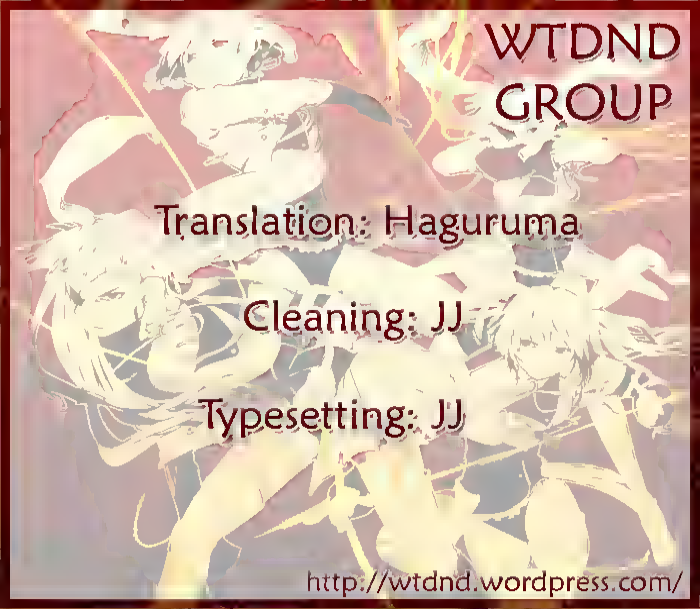
I WILL AT LEAST LET YOU UTTER IT YOURSELF!
THEN I GUESS YOUR MINDS WERE MADE UP FROM THE VERY BEGINNING!
WHAT A WASTE OF TIME!
WELL, THEN. LET ME ANSWER!
ナ！
THROUGH ALL THOSE REPEATED GAMES ...
MY CATHARSIS HAS BEEN LONG FINISHED!

BUT IF THERE IS STILL NEED FOR PUNISHMENT FOR THE SINS I COMMITTED ...
I WILL GLADLY TAKE ON THAT SWEET TORMENT!
I HAVE THAT CONVICTION AS THE ONE WHO CREATED THIS CATBOX!
YOU MAY KILL AND REVIVE ME AS OFTEN AS YOU WANT!
THE GOLDEN LAND WE ARRIVED AT IN THE END, AS WELL AS MY VERY HEART, THE TRUTH ...
I WILL NOT ALLOW THEM TO BE SPLATTERED WITH YOUR BLACK ILLUSIONS!!!
BUT!

THIS IS MY... OUR GOLDEN LAND!!
IF YOU COME DRAGGING MUD IN HERE, BE PREPARED FOR THE CONSEQUENCES!
IN OTHER WORDS ...
I HAVE JUST ONE THING TO TELL YOU...

ALL SHIPS PREPARE YOUR WEAPONS!
READY FOR ATTACK!
THE TARGET IS...
THE GOLDEN LAND!
...I WILL SLAP YOU SO HARD YOU WAKE UP, MIS-SY !!!

Episode8: *Twilight of the golden witch*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